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Dr. Zielina

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Journal 1: El Perro Andaluz

This film was interesting to me due to the fact of its age; it was made in the early 1900s. Furthermore, the movie has no dialog and is completely silent yet maintains its integrity as an interesting film. One scene in specific comes to mind when the director decides to add a scene of an eye being cut open. I believe he had goals into shocking his viewers and pushing the limits of what could be shown in a film. Another controversial scene was when he feels the woman's breasts while exemplifying his desire of lust for the female body parts. In the time that this was made, that scene was pushing the envelope very far to see how much it would bend.

All in all, this film was made during the surrealist artistic era and is a prime example of this shown in film. The ideas and messages are abstract, dark and often hard to understand; however, deeper messages are spread to the viewers once they analyze deeper into what is being shown.

Journal 2: That Obscure Object of Desire

That Obscure Object of Desire is the last film by Luis Buñuel and was released in 1977. According to Kathleen Murphy, author of “The Theatre of Cruelty”, Buñuel’s last film is a theater of cruelty. In my opinion, this is shown in the sexual tension in between Mateo and Conchita, and it continues throughout the movie until the last scene when the woman is stitching a bloody dress. After living in Chile for the last year I have learned a completely different meaning to the word “concha” or “conchita” and when I heard this in the movie I was surprised that it was her name. Throughout the movie I liked the fact that her name was Conchita, because to me it strengthened the sexual tension in between the two characters.

Elements of surrealism were apparent in *The Obscure Object of Desire*. This normally wouldn’t be something that I would recognize, but after slightly discussing it in class I decided to look up a little about surrealism in film. After realizing that surrealism often brings shocking imagery to the screen I remembered a few instances where I was surprised by the vulgarity in the film given that it came out in 1977. When Mateo was rubbing Conchita down in the bathroom would be an example of this. The dual personality of Conchita represented in the two actresses playing her also brought a bizarre sensation by confusing the viewer. Again this added a nice shock factor to the surrealistic features of the film.

Journal 3: Man Facing Southeast

In the Argentinian film *Man Facing Southeast*, a man presents himself as an alien from another planet after entering an insane asylum. The employment staff instantly took him in as insane, however, one doctor, Dr. Davis, grew interested in his story and spent way more time with this specific patient, Rantes. The chronic question throughout the film asks if Rantes is actually an extraterrestrial, or is the entire story an act?

When this film was made Argentina has recently gotten out of The Dirty War, where between 10,000 and 30,000 people disappeared, and in my opinion the feeling of being lost is shown through Rantes. As he is an “alien” lost on a new planet, I imagine many people found themselves in a similar situation once they found out they can’t trace their past to any relatives. Rantes communicates with his family as he faces southeast and looks upwards. To me, this could symbolize the many people surely to have prayed night after night hoping their family is ok, or simply just wondering where they came from.

I believe this film questions human problems and situations, and assesses these things with an outsiders point of view. One of my favorite sentences exchanged between Dr. Davis and Rantes was when Dr. Davis said, “I just want to cure you” while Rantes responded, “I don’t want your cure, just your understanding.” Everybody thought he was crazy, when in reality he was just trying to connect with people and understand his surroundings.

This film demonstrates The Dirty War and los desaparecidos in an abstract manor, and I was extremely surprised to find out that K-Pax stole this idea; disappointed as well.

Journal 4: The Official Story

I have seen *La historia oficial* various times, and this time I enjoyed it as I always have. Unlike *Man Facing Southwest* which uses abstract concepts and thought provoking methods, *La historia oficial* shows us the effects of The Dirty War on a more personal level with straightforward messages that target our emotions with stronger passion. These emotions are hit because Gaby is such a cute innocent little child while Alicia is a very loving mother. The idea that any given person who thought they were doing a good deed by adopting a child could be stealing child unknowingly is disgusting. Various topics are brought up in this movie that are easily discussed in great detail. The role of men and women, history class versus the truth, many political issues and human torture are just a few examples of these topics.

The end of the film, to me, gives the viewer a sense of helplessness. Even if Gaby's grandmother truly was that lady Alicia found on the street, what does it help? There still would be tens of thousands of others lost in the world of *los desaparecidos* looking for their loved ones and family members. Even though it is hard during the film to understand Rodrigo's point of view, he basically just wants the best for Gaby, and he understands the depth of the situation and how she is one out of many. I understand his good intentions, however, I understand Alicia's passion to find Gaby's true history. It was a very sad time period in Argentina's history.

Journal 5: Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown

At first glance of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* it is easy to see that it is a more modern video, which is true, because it was made in 1988 where film technology had already improved including audio. Different to all the movies we have seen so far, this movie is a more light hearted in a sense that it is comical and isn't trying to represent a seriously hard time in a country's history. It seems to be more directed towards entertainment than education.

This movie positions its focus on the power of the female, and in my opinion, it does so in a way that challenged the times when it was created. It reversed the role of man and women. As we have seen in past films, it traditionally is the man who is changing around the women, and the women who are running away from their desires and motives; however, in this movie the woman takes no grief from the man nor feels fear while she runs around like a mad woman with a gun.

Pedro Almodóvar did a great job with the screenplay and directing of this movie. The kind of cartoonish look for the characters really fits the comedic aspect of the film in total.

Journal 6: All About My Mother

This movie, if I were to describe it in one word, was shocking, but I think that was the entire intention of the director. This film was demonstrating the diversity contained within the borders of Spain, and proving that Madrid was not the only city that existed in Spain.

This movie was shocking because of the amount of prostitution and transvestites through the entirety of the movie, and the nonchalant manor in which they are presented. I think it was shocking to be because in the United States transvestites and prostitution is looked highly down upon, and in the majority of the states is very illegal, in the case of prostitution. It was surprising to me to watch males, females and transvestites all interact with little judgment on gender, although this wasn't universally true throughout the film.

Another shocking point in the movie that really got to me is that the future nun got pregnant by Lola, I believe, and obtained the AIDS disease. It was a disappointing moment for me because she was very likeable and I was hoping for her to find her way in life.

An interesting point about the film is the name Agrado. She is always out trying to please and make other people's lives better. The downside to her life doing this all the time is she has no room or time to help her own life out or to look for pleasure for herself. This adds a deeper sense of complexity into the film's character base.

Journal 7: The Headless Woman

This film really had me intrigued the entire time. As it started, the blonde woman hits what is projected to be a human, and drives away with a guilty look on her face as she refuses to turn around and see what she hit. As we find out, this was probably a mistake for her due to the fact that she loses her head over thinking and stressing about if she actually hit and killed a person or not.

The director did a masterful job building the suspense of the unknown throughout the film by creating tension with the blonde haired woman. Multiple times I found myself changing my belief on whether she was guilty or not guilty of hitting and killing a person, that is to say, the director successfully composed this film to have the viewer engaged on what was going on in the movie.

A main theme I took from this film was the separation of classes. It could have very easily been a human that she hit, causing families and friends much grief; however, since she was driving in a lower class area, not many people would have been able to report it. If the victim was of a higher-class family, the event would not have passed by so quietly, and I believe this movie captured this separation.

Journal 8: Terra em Transe

For me, the film *Terra em Transe* was a little hard to follow. I understand the tactic used by the director to slow things down a lot, but it was so slow sometimes that it was really hard for me to completely focus and follow along in what was going on. On the other hand, I gathered some interesting ideas about the film through taking some notes and thinking more about it.

The main character is torn in a political conflict and can't stand two equally corrupt political men. A made up city called El Dorado needed a political leader, and some people called in hell. Through some of the experiences gone through in the film, one of my favorite ideas was that the air belongs to the condors as the streets belong to the people. This brings up a unique perspective on freedom due to the fact that we have police that rule the street, and even though we believe we are free we really are oppressed, especially in lower class areas of third-world countries. Freedom is also expressed in the sex scenes and Carnival scenes of the populations celebrating and partying during the traditional festival.

An interesting aspect of this film was the silence. There was no background music, and the silence in the film added to the slowness effect the director was aiming for.

Another theme present in the film is a common theme throughout South America; that is the conflict between dictatorship and democracy.

Journal 9: Black Orpheus

Out of all the Brazilian films we watched so far in class, *Black Orpheus* has to be one of my favorites. When the majority of the world thinks of Carnival as this crazy modern day party that lasts a long time, this film shows the viewers the true essence and spirit of Carnival. By having the film take place in La Favela during Carnival, the truth about the poverty and the struggles they survive are brought out in a method that doesn't judge. The people that live there are poor, but find the means to buy dresses, instruments, costumes and other supplies for this massive party. During the week they are happy and enjoy what they have.

I really enjoyed the character that represented death in the film. It demonstrates to the viewers the chaos of La Favela, and shows us that even though everybody is partying and having a good time, it is extremely easy for unfortunate events to occur. Death could be lurking around any corner, and it would be really easy to get away with murder almost at any given time.

I loved the representation of the Greek myth of Orpheus created in this Brazilian film. The character in the movie was an amazing person with a great soul, and the way he interacted with the little boys was impossible not to love. They couldn't have ended the movie in a better way, in my opinion. When the little boys grabbed the guitar and were playing for the little girl, I couldn't help but smile.

Journal 10: City of God

No doubt was *City of God* the most violent movie we have seen so far this year, and also the most modern action packed film. I was truly surprised that all of the actors were not professionals, rather found in the street and hired on the spot. Considering this, I am shocked on the quality of the acting along with the quality of the movie. If the goal of the director was to achieve maximum authenticity in the actors and environment in which the movie was filmed, he succeeded.

City of God, without worrying about censorship, shows the viewers the brutal truth about what has gone on in the Ghettos in Rio de Janeiro in means to educate the world about the violence and possibly help stop it. For better or for worse, they did a great job projecting the government set up communities and its failures to remove criminals and violence out of the favelas.

I noticed how the main characters started as wannabe gangsters, and in the end some of them truly turned into big gangsters in their areas; however, the sad thing about this is as they were growing bigger and bigger, young lost children looked up to them as idols and tried to imitate them. In the end the group of young children wannabe gangsters takes over the business of drugs and violence just like the original main characters giving the story a life-cycle effect. This almost made me feel like they could have a *City of God 2: The Sad Cycle*.

Journal 11: The Central Station

My experience with *The Central Station* was a very good one. The film was able to move me emotionally from beginning to end due to the transformation of Dora from a mean deceiving person in the beginning to an honest, loving and happy person at the end. Looking back, however, I realized that she might not have had a choice to be deceiving: she could have not have access to send out that many messages, the messages might have been impossible to send, or the messages may be written to the deceased or spirits. It was interesting to see a society with such a high level of uneducated people who can't read or right. For instance, the two older brothers were holding on to a letter from their father without knowing what it said because, neither of them could read nor right.

A topic brought up in this film that was strongly expressed was religion. Personally I get a little uncomfortable with the idea of religion, and this is especially true when I see communities in South America praising the Catholic Religion, the same religion that led the conquerors of their land, who destroyed their villages, raped their women and enslaved the survivors.

On a happier note, the storyline to this movie was one of the best we have seen all year. The character conflicts that lead to better relationships provides great emotional connection between the actors and the viewers. When the little boy buys the lady a dress, or compliments her on her looks it really helps bring the bond stronger, and shows the development from the beginning when their were virtually enemies.

Journal 12: Hour of the Star

This movie shows us that no matter how bad it gets, life can always get worse. Poor Macabea never gets a break in *Hour of the Star* after her aunt dies, however, Macabea lives life with a smile on her face even when everyone calls her ugly. I like how Macabea lives her life everyday with an open mind to accept whatever may come her way, and she doesn't change her methods when she meets her boyfriend.

It was hard for me to watch Macabea's roommate steal her boyfriend for her, because Macabea was so honest and sincere about her feelings that I am not sure she knows how to comprehend having a boyfriend stolen. Her innocence blocks her from understanding what men want, or possibly even what she wants.

The irony behind the fact that she idolizes the beautiful Marilyn Monroe, but is ugly in everyone's eyes pushes the emotional connection the viewer has with Macabea. We wish she could be beautiful as she wishes, but we understand the difficulty she has trying to figure her beauty out. I think her passion for Monroe is an expression of her inner beauty shining out, which may be a unspoken thesis for the movie: Beauty lies within.

All in all, this movie moved me as I found myself captured in the story. The title interests me, because it gives me an impression of a happy movie when in reality it's starts high and goes downhill from there.